

May 15, 2017

American Bar Association, Law Students Division

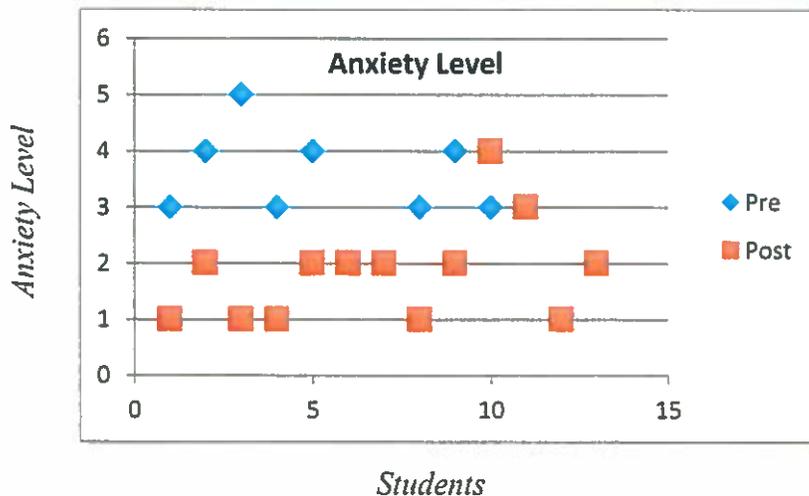
**RE:** The Duquesne University School of Law Power of Music Pilot Program ABA Grant Report

The Student Bar Association wanted to implement the *Power of Music* Pilot Program that was developed by Robin Connors, the Coordinator of the Student Organizations, and was fortunate enough to receive a \$750.00 grant from the Law Student Division of the American Bar Association to launch the program in April of 2017. The program was facilitated in collaboration with Dr. Rachel Whitcomb, from the Duquesne’s Mary Pappert School of Music. During the 4-week program, students learned to play basic ukulele chords, strumming patterns, and the composition of writing a song. The group composed a song with lyrics expressing how they feel during “final exams” and performed it in the last session.

The sole purpose of the Power of Music pilot program was to help our students relax, destress, and build comradery among the student body, all while leaning to play the ukulele. Based on the pre- and post- student survey results, the goals of the pilot program have been achieved and we will continue developing the program and offer it in the 2017-2018 fall and spring semesters.

**1. Reduced Anxiety Level**

In the pre-program survey, 11 students volunteered to participate in the program. Our first question was “What is your anxiety level in daily life?” based on a scale from 1 (very relaxed) to 5 (very stressful). Forty-five percent of students chose level 3, 27% of students chose level 4 and 9% chose level 5. In other words, 81% of students stated that their anxiety level was average or above. However, in the post-program survey, answers to the question “What was your anxiety level after class?”, only 2 students chose level 3 and above. (See chart *Anxiety Level*)

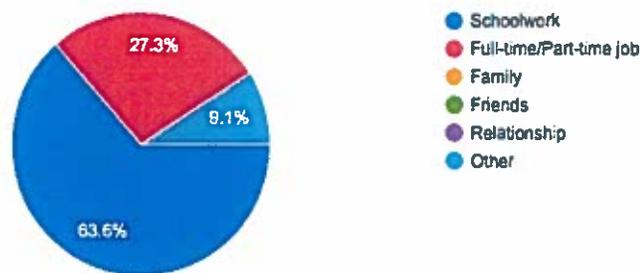


Based on our data, we are confident in claiming that Power of Music Pilot Program helped law students significantly reduce their levels of anxiety. In fact, we included a question “do you feel playing ukulele reduces your stress level” in the post-program survey, and 100% of students answered “Yes”.

In the pre-program survey, we asked what causes them the most anxiety and the majority selected schoolwork. This 4-week program was held before the final exam period, but law students also experience stress from their class work, part-time jobs and internships. Therefore, we are extending the program as a semester-long program in the near future.

### What is the primary reason for your anxiety? (Choose one)

11 responses



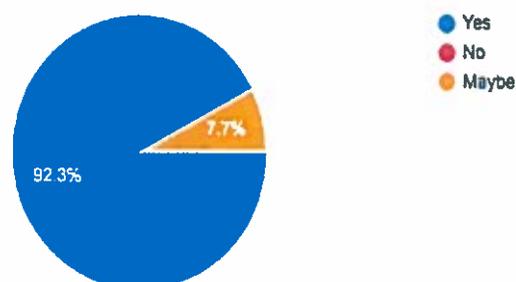
## 2. Reasons to participate

In the pre-program survey, we also asked why students wanted to be involved in this program and what students expected to take away from the program. Ten out of 13 students said “find a way to relax” or “reduced anxiety level”, which was the primary reason that we conducted this program. Furthermore, some students wanted to learn to play the ukulele and expected to obtain the skills to do so from the program.

In our post-program survey, we asked if students would attend sessions if offered in the fall semester. As expected, nearly 100% students gave positive answer (one chose “Maybe”).

### 3) Would you attend this program if offered in the fall?

13 responses



The program has enjoyed a lot of interest from our student body, the University, and the local media. First year student, Chelsie Horne, was interviewed by a Pittsburgh Tribune Review reporter and said, "You're able to escape and laugh at yourself when everything else in law school seems so serious. It's silly and fun and you get to take that moment to yourself and forget about everything legal." The Tribune Review posted an article along with a video from one of our sessions on their news website. (View the video at <https://youtu.be/LQxH0jZUZ2M>).

The ABA grant funds were used to purchase 11 ukuleles, cases, and tuners. The ukuleles are held in the student organization's office, from where students are welcome to borrow them, just like a library for ukuleles. We sincerely hope more and more students will benefit from this program and we will also further the level of collaboration with Duquesne University School of Music.

I have attached copies of the program advertisement, the articles written by the Tribune Review newspaper and the Duquesne University Times. Also included is a PowerPoint with photos from the sessions during the pilot program.

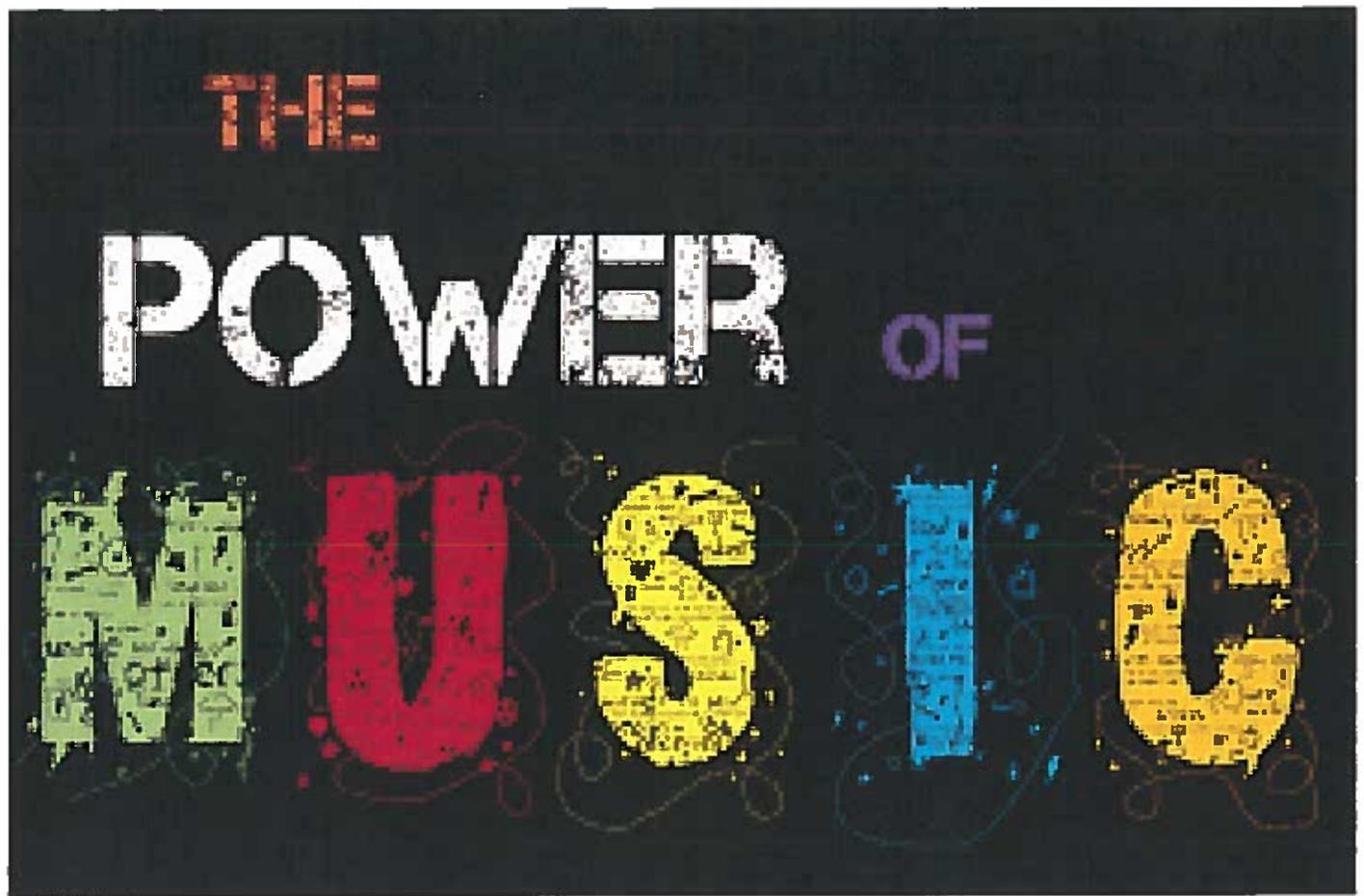
We appreciate your generosity and once again, thank you for the grant to purchase the ukuleles so we can continue the program. By offering the students a creative outlet such, we can enhance their law school experience by fostering comradery with their peers, teaching them to establish a work-life balance, and reduce their stress and anxiety, which in combination will benefit their overall mental health.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need additional information or have any questions.

Sincerely,



Robin Connors  
Coordinator of Student Organizations  
Duquesne University School of Law  
[connorsr@duq.edu](mailto:connorsr@duq.edu)  
412-396-6186



***Room 302***

**Mon. April 10**

**Thurs. April 20**

**Mon. April 24**

**Thurs. April 27**

***Noon – 12:50***

Funded by the ABA Law Student Division

## **Power of Music Pilot Program**

### ***Ukulele Extravaganza***

### **April 2017**

#### **Why music?**

- It is a unique experience that is like no other
- It brings people together and allows for mutual understanding

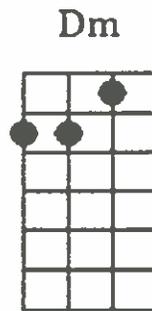
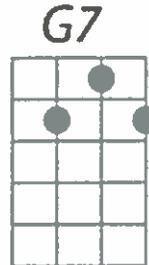
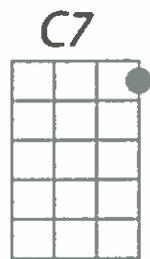
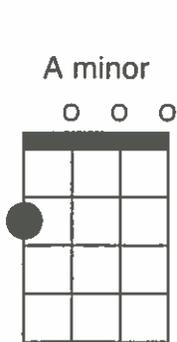
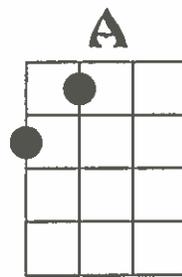
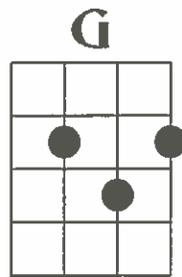
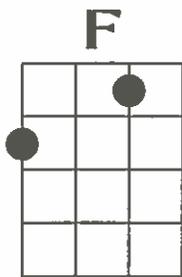
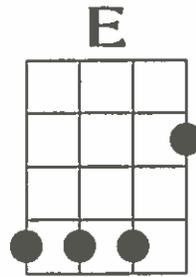
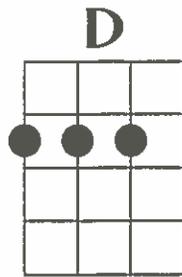
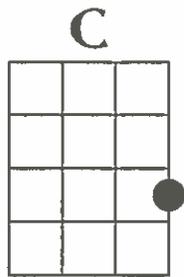
#### **Goals for this program:**

- Relaxation and reduction in anxiety
- Provide a space and time for unique musical interactions
- Allow us....*require* us to be in the moment
- Learn chords and accompaniment techniques on the ukulele
- Play and sing fun and familiar songs
- Move to music
- Make new friends
- Laugh
- Share the energy gained in musical sessions to all other endeavors and responsibilities
- Compose our own original song

#### **Basics:**

- Tune strings: G C E A
  - Try tuner apps (search ukulele tuner)
  - Twist tuners (knobs) to adjust pitch
- Frets
- Strumming
  - D = down
  - U = up
  - Start with thumb
  - Add index fingers
  - Eventually, all fingers

**Power of Music Pilot Program**  
*Ukulele Extravaganza*  
**Session #4 - April 27, 2017**



**Review of Known Chords**

- C G F Am D

**Let It Be**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoVvrLPX4eQ>

**I'm Yours**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTc-ENutOD4>

### Vacation Elation

#### **Intro: vamp on C [island strum]**

**C**

I feel the whole world weighing on my shoulders

**F**

I'm so exhausted

**C**

I'm looking for the last of my composure

**F**

But I finally lost it

**Am**

**G [1-strum]**

There's no more sleep, I'm in so deep

#### **CHORUS [change to 1-strum]**

**C** **Am** **F** **G**

Vacuum of purpose, when my finals are done

**C** **Am** **F** **G**

Reaching the surface, time to dance in the sun

**[island strum]**

**F** **C**

Vacation elation

**C**

I have to write a paper in an hour

**F**

That's fine by me

**C**

I'm gonna try my best, use all my power

**F**

To get a "C"

**Am**

**G [1-strum]**

So much to do, I'll make it through

#### **CHORUS [change to 1-strum]**

**C** **Am** **F** **G**

Vacuum of purpose, when my finals are done

**C** **Am** **F** **G**

Reaching the surface, time to dance in the sun

**C** **Am** **F** **G**

Vacuum of purpose, when my finals are done

**C** **Am** **F** **G**

Reaching the surface, time to dance in the sun

**[island strum]**

**F** **C** **F** **C**

Vacation elation, Vacation elation

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## News for Faculty and Staff

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- [Faculty & Staff Spotlight](#)
- [Grants](#)
- [Mission Matters](#)

## [Ukulele Lessons Helping Law Students Reduce Stress](#)

Posted on April 26, 2017

Ukuleles have tiptoed into Duquesne's School of Law for a four-week pilot program that has already shown to help students reduce stress and anxiety while providing time to socialize with their peers.



The Power of Music, a Student Bar Association program in collaboration with the Mary Pappert School of Music, offers hour-long lunchtime sessions during which Duquesne law students learn to play ukulele together.

As coordinator of student organizations in the law school, Robin Connors works closely with the law students and understands their stress and anxiety, especially with final exams just weeks away. "In the past, I've brought in therapy dogs, hired a masseuse to do chair massages and put out healthy snacks and food during exam time," she said. "My goal was to think of something we could continuously offer as a way to reduce their stress and anxiety over the long term."

Connors, who has been playing the ukulele for nearly two years with the Steel City Ukuleles, said she's experienced the benefits, including decreasing her stress while working full-time and earning a master's degree. "Playing the ukulele has reduced my stress for sure, but I also noticed the other benefits of increased concentration, creativity and reduced anxiety," she said.

After meeting with the Student Bar Association, Connors reached out to the music school and was invited to attend a faculty meeting to ask for assistance in developing a program involving music to help law students. Associate Music Education Professor Dr. Rachel Whitcomb contacted Connors, and the two agreed to collaborate and design the ukulele pilot program.



"We recently incorporated ukulele into our methods classes for undergraduate music education students at Duquesne, so it was a great fit," says Whitcomb. "Ukulele is becoming more and more

popular in our society and in our public schools for many reasons. It is an accompaniment instrument, which allows people to sing and play simultaneously.”

The 12 students have already learned contemporary songs like Jason Mraz’s *I’m Yours* and Taylor Swift’s *Shake it Off* as well as classics like *Margaritaville*, *You Are My Sunshine* and *Skip to My Lou*.

Ukulele has worked well with the law students because it’s easy to learn and the pilot program is just a few weeks long, according to Whitcomb. “I wanted the students to feel that they were completely immersed in music as soon as possible,” Whitcomb explained. “The ukulele allows for that. It is a low stress instrument, which ties into the whole motivation for creating the program.”

Connors said the students are enjoying the lessons and feedback has been very positive. “One student was so excited about the program that he went out and bought a ukulele before we had the first session,” she said.

The American Bar Association Student Division has awarded Connors a small grant that she’ll utilize to buy ukuleles for the program to be offered full-time in beginning this fall.

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- **University Highlights**

- [Grants Received \[April 26, 2017\]](#)

Funds totaling \$530,675 were recently received by Duquesne University; the Education Law Clinic; the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts; the School of Education; the School of Nursing; and the Bayer School of Natural and Environmental Sciences (BSNES).

- [Faculty & Staff Spotlight \[April 26, 2017\]](#)

What have Drs. Ronald Arnett, Mikael Kimelman and Amy Phelps been up to?

- [DU in the News \[April 2017\]](#)

News coverage highlighting Duquesne’s experts and initiatives.

- **Mission Matters**

- [Spring Clean-Up: More Than Picking Up Litter and Planting](#)

The 27<sup>th</sup> annual Spring Clean-Up is a one-day, large-scale litter pick-up and greening event that takes place throughout the South Side and Greater Hill District neighborhoods; however, it is much more than that.

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<http://triblive.com/local/allegheeny/12243286-74/duquesne-law-students-learn-the-ukulele-to-relieve-stress>

## Duquesne law students learn the ukulele to relieve stress

CHRIS TOGNERI 🐦 (<https://twitter.com/ChrisTogneri>) | Friday, April 28, 2017, 4:30 p.m.



*Chris Togneri | Tribune-Review*

Law students at Duquesne University are taking a unique approach to handling the stress of finals: They are learning the ukulele.

Law students at Duquesne University are taking a unique approach to handling the stress of finals: They are learning the ukulele.

"As the school year progresses, I see (students) becoming more isolated, I see more stress," said Robin Connors, coordinator of student organizations at Duquesne's School of Law. "I've tried different things over my six years here: bringing in a chair massage person throughout finals, making sure we have healthy snacks. We work with Animal Friends and bring in therapy dogs.

"They love it, but it's always just a band-aid. It never helps them long-term."

So Connors, who took up the ukulele two years ago as she worked on her master's degree, approached professors at the Mary Pappert School of Music. They came up with "The Power of Music," a four-week pilot program in which law school students learned to play the ukulele twice a week at lunchtime. Twelve students signed up.

"It's working because they're laughing at themselves and they're able to relax," said Rachel Whitcomb, associate professor of music education. "There are very few things we do where we're not stressed about what's coming up next. In music, particularly when there's an intricate chord progression or you really have to think about, 'where do my fingers go from here,' you can't be anywhere else but in the music.

"That is what sets music apart from any other discipline. It's an experience, it's a unique experience that isn't like anything else. And when you're involved in a song and you're playing an instrument along with a song, you have to be there."

During lessons Monday and Thursday, students sat in a mock courtroom at the School of Law and played popular songs about letting go of stress and anxiety: "Let It Be" by the Beatles, "Margaritaville" by Jimmy Buffett and "Shake It Off" by Taylor Swift.

During their last lesson, they performed an original song: "Vacation Elation," written by Whitcomb and the law students, in which the students cast a hopeful eye to the day after finals.

School officials applied for and received a \$750 grant from the American Bar Association Law Student Division to buy more ukuleles. Connors said she envisions a day when students can check ukuleles out like library books, then practice in a designated ukulele room at the Law School.

The ukulele is an ideal instrument for the program because it is inexpensive and easy to learn, Connors and Whitcomb said.

Plus, it evokes feelings of relaxation and levity, they said.

"You think of the beach and a type of fun sound associated with it," Whitcomb said. "And the ease of playing it makes it enjoyable for them. ... It's working because they are laughing at themselves and they're able to relax."

Chelsie Horne, a first-year law student, said the classes offer a needed "escape."

"You're able to escape and laugh at yourself when everything else in law school seems so serious," she said. "It's silly and it's fun and you get to take that moment to yourself and forget about everything legal."

This story has been updated to reflect that Connors took up the ukulele while she worked on her master's degree.

Chris Togneri is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-380-5632 or [ctogneri@tribweb.com](mailto:ctogneri@tribweb.com) (<mailto:ctogneri@tribweb.com>) or on Twitter [@ChrisTogneri](https://twitter.com/ChrisTogneri) (<https://twitter.com/ChrisTogneri>).

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